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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Attorney General's Office charges mortgage loan officer with first degree theft

VANCOUVER—The Financial Crimes Unit of the state Attorney General's Office charged a loan officer today with stealing more than \$8,500 in fees designated for an early mortgage pay-off program .

J. Anthony Hansen of Tacoma was charged with one count of first-degree theft and six counts of second-degree theft. The first-degree theft charge carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$20,000 fine. Each second-degree theft charge carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. The charges were brought at the request of the Washington State Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) with assistance from the state's mortgage lending fraud prosecution fund.

According to charging papers filed in Clark County Superior Court, Hansen, 42, was an independent contractor with Country Home Finance for twenty-six months. During this time he charged several customers, on average, \$600 for a Mortgage Payment Acceleration Program (MPAP).

Hansen used advertising materials obtained from Equity Corp., a Florida Corporation, and claimed he would enroll customers in the MPAP; however, none of the customers were ever enrolled in the MPAP with Equity Corp. The investigation began after a report was made to Country Home Finance about Hansen's activities.

The information alleges that on seven occasions Hansen obtained money from his clients by deception and on one occasion Hansen wrongfully appropriated misdelivered funds. A warrant has been issued for his arrest.

The state's mortgage lending fraud prosecution fund was created by the Legislature in 2003 to aid prosecutors in bringing mortgage lending fraud cases. Funding is generated through a \$1 fee for each recording of a deed of trust.

This is the second case filed by the Attorney General's Financial Crimes Unit as a result of the fund. The first case resulted in the sentencing of a Grays Harbor County woman for embezzling more than \$325,000 in funds from the trust account of Ocean Shores Escrow, Inc.

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